

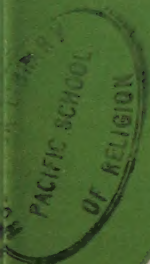
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responsible

family planning

Elmer J. F. Arndt • Albert T. Rasmussen
William L. Bradley

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THE POPULATION EXPLOSION was the subject of the December 1958 issue of *SOCIAL ACTION*. In the major article, Dr. Richard M. Fagley described the dangerous trend toward overpopulation; various methods of limiting the rate of growth of the population, including birth control; and the attitudes of major religious groups toward family limitation.

For centuries human beings barely reproduced rapidly enough to maintain their tenuous foothold upon the earth. Temporary increases in population were wiped out by famine, disease, pestilence and war. It took centuries, from the beginning of human life to 1830, for the world population to reach the number of one billion. But it doubled in one century, reaching two billion in 1930. United Nations studies indicate that, if present trends continue, the population will reach three billion in 1963 and rise to nearly seven billion in the year 2000.

While the production of food and other necessities of life is rising, the gains are not sufficient to maintain the population which experts forecast will soon inhabit the earth. In many underdeveloped countries valiant efforts to increase production and raise the standard of living are defeated by unprecedented growth in the population.

THE COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION began in February 1959 to draft a policy statement on responsible parenthood and the population problem. It called a Consultation on Responsible Parenthood which was held in September 1959 in New York. Dr. Elmer J. F. Arndt prepared a paper which was discussed by the members of the Consultation: Miss Fern Babcock; and Messrs. Elmer J. F. Arndt, William L. Bradley, John Dillenberger, Richard M. Fagley, F. Nelsen Schlegel, Roger Shinn, and William E. Wimer.

There were two major results of the Consultation: plans were drafted for this issue of *SOCIAL ACTION*; and suggestions were made for the policy statement. The Reverend F. Nelsen Schlegel prepared the first draft of the statement, "Responsible Parenthood and the Population Problem," which was revised and adopted by the CCSA in January 1960.

NATIONAL ATTENTION focused on the population problem. *The United Church Herald* carried informative articles on the subject by Dr. Fagley, Dr. John C. Bennett and others. The Columbia Broadcasting Company presented "The Population Explosion" with Howard K. Smith as moderator. Wide publicity was given to a recommendation of the President's Committee to Study the U.S. Military Assistance Program (the Draper Report): "We recommend that in order to meet more effectively the problems of economic development, the U.S. (1) assist those countries with which it is cooperating in economic aid programs, on request, in the formulation of their plans designed to deal with the problem of rapid population growth, (2) increase its assistance to local programs relating to maternal and child welfare . . . , and (3) strongly support studies and appropriate research . . . to meet the serious challenge posed by rapidly expanding populations. . . ." Discussion about the advisability of electing a Roman Catholic as President of the United States also centered attention on the question: How would a president who was a Roman Catholic respond to requests for foreign aid from underdeveloped countries, if some of the funds were to be spent for education and materials for birth control?

THIS ISSUE brings our readers Dr. Arndt's thoughtful discussion of "Responsible Family Planning," the first draft of which was prepared for the Consultation. "Marital Behavior and World Impoverishment" is a stimulating article-review by Dr. Albert T. Rasmussen of *The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility* by Dr. Fagley. An article by Dr. William L. Bradley describes the present legal situation concerning birth control in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The policy statement on "Responsible Parenthood and the Population Problem" adopted by the CCSA will be found on pages 24 to 27. Ministers and others interested in planning programs on this important subject will find suggestions in the departments.

—FERN BABCOCK



Responsible family planning

There is no quick or simple solution to the problems stemming from the rapid increase in the population. It is encouraging that various national and international agencies are devoting attention to the social, political, economic, medical, and educational questions involved. Because of the wide range of the effects of the population explosion, only a wise combination of measures can meet the situation. Such a combination of programs would include: vigorous economic and social development; financial and technical assistance; the easing of certain pressures by means of migration; development of education; and the extension of family planning. Such programs necessitate the application of science and technology to agriculture and industry and call for appropriate action by national and international bodies. However, no acceptable solution can exclude the assumption of responsibility by individual parents.

By Elmer J. F. Arndt, Professor, Eden Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri; and a member of the Editorial Board for SOCIAL ACTION.

A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF MARRIAGE

Two basic convictions provide the larger context within which Christians consider the issues of responsible family planning.

God will sustain the conditions for life

The first conviction affirms that God, who calls the worlds into being, is at work in the present. His providential care and government sustain his creation. He has given his promise to sustain the conditions necessary for human life. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). God's good will towards men enables us to stand fast in faith towards the future. The critical problems raised by the rapid increase in population are not occasions for despair; they are occasions for the use of such knowledge and skills as we have to provide the best possible environment for human well-being in a new set of circumstances.

Christian faith finds expression within the family

The second conviction is that the Christian fellowship and its members have the obligation to order their lives to the end that the new obedience of faith finds expression within the family as well as in other areas of life, and to make known by precept and example God's order for this most intimate and basic of social institutions. From the very beginning the church has sought to make the Christian witness effective in the family and to bring the gospel to bear upon the relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children. The growing awareness of the critical issues raised by the rapid increase in population provides an occasion for the church to manifest again in a special way its concern for the family. The problems of the present call for a re-examination of traditional teaching in the light of the gospel, of new developments in knowledge, and of changing circumstances. If in the past Christian thought concerning the family has been too uncritical in some respects, the present requires serious and sustained efforts on the part of the Church to discharge its responsibility to provide guidance.

The issues involved in responsible parenthood need to be understood in the context of the more inclusive relation of hus-

band and wife. From the Christian perspective responsible parenthood can take place only in the context of marriage.

Man and woman become one flesh

Marriage in Christian teaching is an all-inclusive, life-long, exclusive community of life shared by one man and one woman who have freely and mutually chosen each other. It is a relationship between two human beings, one male and one female, of such intimacy and completeness that the two "become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24 and Ephesians 5:31). "Flesh," in this context, means not merely physical body but rather personal being in its totality. Thus when two human beings "become one flesh" they are joined not only in a "physical union" but also in their total beings for whole and unrestricted community. Matrimony is a physical-spiritual union in which physical and spiritual elements are inseparably related to each other in a subtle complex of interaction. Thus, in coitus, the total personal selves of the partners are involved; and the spiritual character of the relationship finds expression, is nurtured by, and transcends physical union. The Christian ideal of matrimony neither disallows the physical (cf. I Corinthians 7:5) nor makes sexual enjoyment the justification of marriage.

Marriage stems from love. Without love, there can be no fellowship of life, no sharing of life between two persons who both differ from each other and complement each other. Matrimony is a relationship under the law of love and a relationship in which the law of love is to find concrete fulfilment.

It is a particular relationship of fellowship between a man and a woman who have freely chosen each other as partners. Yet marriage is more than neighbor-love in a specific, concrete relation. Marriage is complete relationship, including physical as well as psychical elements. It is a lifelong relationship, continuing through various changes—"in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in prosperity and in adversity." It is an exclusive relationship between one man and one woman.

Marriage is a mutual decision

Marriage has its basis in nature; it is the response to a mutual, spontaneous attraction of the one for the other. Yet marriage is a personal relation of two persons, and therefore is much more than "nature." It includes the specifically ethical element of a

durable and lifelong mutual loyalty. It is a mutual decision, and therefore a responsible act on the part of two responsible persons. From the perspective of the marriage partners, who are ethically serious, the marriage bond requires freely given, mutual love.

Persons are free to marry or not

Marriage is an act of freedom, the expression of a free decision made by two responsible selves to be loyal to each other. It is a concrete expression of their freedom. The marriage bond is constituted by a free act and sustained by free acts. The moral element, not the biological, gives human marriage its distinctive character and its stability.

Men and women are not compelled to marry either by natural or spiritual necessity. Marriage, indeed, may be rightly viewed as the purpose of human bisexuality (Genesis 2:18); yet marriage is not necessary in order that a man or a woman realize fully the meaning of his or her humanity. Human beings cannot determine for themselves whether they will be male or female; they can only accept the fact that each is one sex or the other; and that each sex, different from the other, is complementary to the other. But entrance into the marriage relation lies within the sphere of human decision.

Marriage is a divine gift

Marriage, in the Christian understanding of it, is not only a free decision but also a divinely given vocation and gift. God's call to two persons to enter into marriage comes in and through their being brought together. The mutual decision to share their lives in partnership is the acknowledgment and recognition of God's call and gift.

The connection between the free, mutual decision to enter into life partnership and God's call and gift is very close and meaningful. Human marriage is, for Christians, the image of God's grace expressed in his covenant with Israel and the love of Jesus Christ for his Church. (See, for example, Hosea 2:14-16; Jeremiah 31:32; Isaiah 54:5; Ephesians 5:29-33.) If they understand God's grace in terms of the marital relation, they also recognize the meaning and norm of marriage in God's gracious relation to Israel and Christ's love for his Church.

Marriage is "holy matrimony" because it reflects divine grace

The importance of the concept of marriage as a fellowship of life, undergirded by mutual love and grounded in God's call and gift, lies in the fact that it brings into focus the value and rightness of the marriage relationship itself. The first and fundamental justification for marriage is that it should be in actuality what in God's order it is meant to be, namely, a life fellowship of one man and one woman. Such a fellowship is not only according to God's holy ordinance but also promised his blessing.

Marriage without children may be fruitful

Just because it is so widely held that the justification and primary intention of marriage is the procreation and nurture of children, it must be stressed that marriage has a true and significant meaning even if the husband and wife do not become father and mother. Moreover, while it is certainly the case that Christian teaching regards the act of coitus divorced from the context of mutual love and loyalty (that is, solely for pleasure or as a purely incidental act) as contrary to God's order, there is no reason that life-partners should not recognize that sexual intercourse has its own significance and justification by virtue of the fact that it is included in and expresses their life-partnership. Coitus between life-partners does not depend for its meaning and significance on the wish or the readiness to have children.

Marriage as life-fellowship, including the physical component of sexual intercourse, has its own intrinsic significance. The fellowship of husband and wife may be enlarged to include children when there is no inability to bear children. Parenthood is one of the great joys of human life; it is also one of its greatest responsibilities. Childlessness is a sorrow; but a childless marriage, whether the couple is unable to bear children or has decided not to have children, is not therefore an "unfruitful marriage." Children are not the only way in which a marriage may be fruitful.

CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF PROCREATION

In the Old Testament, the dominant view is that children are divine blessings and that childlessness is not merely a misfortune but a shame and disgrace for the wife. The Old Testament outlook found expression in Genesis 1:22: "Be fruitful and

multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it." To mention but two further examples of the Old Testament view, God is praised in Psalm 113:9 because "he gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children" and in Psalm 127:3-5 we read: "Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are the sons of one's youth. Happy is he who has his quiver full of them!"

Freedom from the law "to increase and multiply"

While Christian parents join with the people of the Old Testament in their expressions of gratitude for children and in their recognition that children are a gift of God, the Old Testament command, "Be fruitful and multiply," cannot be accepted in the Christian era. To do so is to deny the significance of the coming of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of the Promised One. The command, "Be fruitful and multiply," like much else in the Old Testament law, belonged to the old dispensation. Jesus Christ has brought freedom from this "law" also.

If Christian freedom includes the freedom from the law to "increase and multiply," the Christian is liberated as well from the sort of piety which identifies whatever occurs as ordained by divine providence. In the light of Christian truth, Christian people are not bound to accept as God's providential ordering the chance occurrence of births. Reverence for divine Providence is not fatalistic acceptance of the accidental. In the act of procreation husband and wife are not relieved of responsibility on the ground that the use of reason, reflection and consideration of the well-being of parents and children is an unwarranted interference with God's government.

Medical knowledge makes family planning possible

Christian parents, together with all other parents, are free to use the resources of modern medical knowledge for responsible family planning. Indeed, modern medicine has made possible a larger freedom, actual for some and potential for all, to plan families. With the help of modern medical knowledge, the times of the births of children and the number of children can be removed in great measure from the sphere of chance to the sphere of responsible decision. The means provided by modern medicine enhances the sphere of responsible freedom in the family.

Responsible parenthood includes responsibility to use the resources available in a responsible way.

Medical knowledge in the sphere of family planning, together with all knowledge which confers power, may be used for good or for evil purposes. The possible misuse of knowledge, however, is not sufficient reason to withhold it or the means it makes possible. To do so is to deny to others access to the means which make possible responsible decision. When states make the sale of contraceptive devices illegal, for example, they in effect deny some of the means for the exercise of responsible freedom to the husbands and wives within their boundaries. If such a course should be urged in the name of morality, the ironic result is that a higher morality is sacrificed to the provisions of a moral code and persons are subordinated to the requirements of a code.

The decision to have children must be made responsibly

The procreation of children is itself an act of freedom and therefore an act to be determined responsibly. The question, then, which confronts husbands and wives is how they may responsibly exercise their freedom, if they are able to have children. What considerations enter into responsible parenthood?

The idea of responsible parenthood presupposes, for those spouses who can have children, that the possibility of children is not rejected. Children may be desired, even when means are used to restrict the number of births. The connection between sexual intercourse and procreation can be practically affirmed without leaving the timing and frequency of births to chance. The concept of "responsible parenthood" implies the willingness of husband and wife to enlarge their fellowship to include children. It excludes the attitudes of unwillingness to have any children whether because of a purely hedonistic view of sexual intercourse, or because of a disinclination to accept parental responsibility. Such motives are not responsible. Christian freedom is, among other things, freedom from enslaving sensuality and selfishness.

FACTORS DETERMINING THE SIZE OF FAMILIES

With growing agreement, Christian thought is moving in the direction of recognizing that the responsibility for deciding upon the number and frequency of children has been laid by God

upon the consciences of parents everywhere. This responsibility is to be discharged in faith. Family planning ought to be the result of thoughtful and prayerful decision. Among the factors that will enter into a thoughtful decision are: the health of the mother, the ability of the family to provide proper care and nurture for the children, and the capacity of the society to provide appropriately for the equipment of the children so that they in turn may contribute to it.

The decision should be mutual

Married partners owe to each other that the decisions concerning the spacing and number of births be mutual. Certainly, the decision to have a child is not exclusively the father's any more than it should be exclusively the mother's, although the father will give to the mother the predominant role in arriving at their mutual decision. Neither spouse may rightfully impose his or her will on the other. Too frequently mothers bear unwanted children, often because conception is a matter of accident rather than of personal decision.

Children have the right to be wanted by their parents

An unwanted child is deprived at the outset of its life of the welcome to which it is entitled. A child should not begin its life under the stigma of being an unfortunate accident or an unwelcome intruder into the life-fellowship of its parents.

Children are to be valued as persons in their own right. They have not only a right to be wanted but also a right to be wanted as persons. They should not be valued primarily as economic or social assets or as means to assure the comfort of their parents in their old age or, as is believed in some areas, to assure the beatitude of their parents after death. Children have a right to parental care in infancy and youth and to be properly equipped by their society to serve God and their fellowmen in it when they reach maturity.

Population should be related to national resources

Husbands and wives owe a responsibility to other families on the earth, especially to other families in their nation, to take into account the relation of resources to the total population. Practical acknowledgment of each family's responsibility to others does not mean that childlessness is being urged on husbands and

wives. It does mean that in making their personal decisions on the size of their families they will consider the effect of their decision on other couples and families.

A special urgency attaches to such considerations in areas where there is a rapid increase of population together with widespread poverty, insufficient food supplies and shortage of other necessities, and low potential for rapid economic development. Responsible parenthood includes consideration of such factors.

Unfortunately, in some of those regions where population pressure is greatest, a fatalistic attitude towards birth and death, supported, if not engendered, by poverty and high mortality, is widely prevalent and human personality is not highly valued. Christians in wealthier regions have a duty to help their fellow-men in regions suffering from the complex of grinding poverty, high birthrate and high mortality towards conditions in which they can attain the freedom to make the personal decisions included in responsible parenthood.

Decisions on the number and frequency of births will be made by Christians prayerfully as well as thoughtfully. Prayerfulness includes both the acknowledgment of responsibility to God for the decisions and trust in his grace.

CHOICE OF METHODS IN FAMILY PLANNING

Decisions concerning the number and frequency of births inevitably include the choice of means. The practice of brief periods of continence within marriage, when mutually and freely agreed on, is a virtue of positive worth and a virtue attainable by Christian people. Such periods of mutually agreed on continence are by no means, however, the whole answer to family planning. To urge such brief periods of mutually agreed on continence, however valuable as a voluntary discipline, as a substitute for or an adequate alternative to such means as are now available for controlling conception, is unjustifiable. Discipline in sex-life is justifiable for such reasons as resistance to sensuality or for the sake of some higher good. The practice of continence ceases to be a discipline with positive worth when it is practiced by spouses to avoid conception.

The means of family planning chosen by Christian people will be subject to the requirement that they are admissible to the Christian conscience. That conscience will not approve means

which involve the destruction of life or do physical or emotional harm. In assessing the effects and usefulness of any particular means, Christians will properly turn to scientific studies for guidance.

A variety of acceptable means

There does not appear to be any moral distinction between such means of family planning as restricting sexual intercourse to periods of infertility, using artificial barriers to prevent the meeting of sperm and ovum, and the use of safe and effective drugs to inhibit or control ovulation in a calculable way. The choice between such means is in large measure a matter of "clinical and aesthetic choice," to use the words of a Committee of the Lambeth Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion.

Sterilization is another method for limiting the number of children. Sterilization of the husband after the birth of several children has won substantial support in some quarters and even received governmental encouragement in at least one country. Sterilization of either spouse differs from the use of mechanical devices or drugs taken to inhibit or control ovulation in that the effect is permanent. This disadvantage of sterilization is that changes may occur which alter the family's situation in such ways that more children are desired and justifiably so. If a practical method of temporary sterilization could be developed, it would, no doubt, have much to commend it in areas where various factors make the use of mechanical devices or drugs difficult in practice. It is pertinent to add the caution that, at present, our knowledge of the effects of sterilization on the total personality is incomplete. Until we have more knowledge, our judgments on sterilization must be tentative and provisional.

Disapproval of abortion

Christian conscience cannot approve of abortion, unless the termination of a pregnancy is necessary to save the life of the mother; and such an exception indicates that abortion is not acceptable as a means of family planning. Abortion involves the destruction of human life. The high rates of abortion in some regions, both in the East and in the West testify to the determination of some parents to prevent unwanted births by any means however bad. The widespread use of abortion and even, in some

countries, its legalization, do not commend it. It violates the rights of personality.

GOALS OF FAMILY PLANNING

The exercise of family planning is directed toward the goal of safeguarding and enhancing the rights of personality. Responsible parenthood is the application of respect for the human person in the sphere of the family, within the family unit, and between families. It is the liberation of personal being from the tyranny of chance and accident in the spacing and number of births. It is the enhancement of the personal being of members of the family and the enlargement of the area of personal decision for parents. In the practice of responsible parenthood, parents move forward towards the fuller realization of that humanity which is the divinely appointed goal for man.

Husband and wife are called to exercise the power of procreation responsibly before God. This implies planning their parenthood in accordance with their ability to provide for their children and carefully nurture them in fullness of Christian faith and life. . . . Choice as to means of conception control should be made upon professional medical advice.

UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA,
20th Biennial Convention, 1956

Planned parenthood, practiced in Christian conscience, may fulfill rather than violate the will of God.

METHODIST CHURCH, GENERAL CONFERENCE, 1956

The 171st General Assembly approves the principle of voluntary family planning and responsible parenthood, affirms that the proper use of medically approved contraceptives may contribute to the spiritual, emotional and economic welfare of the family, and urges the repeal of laws prohibiting the availability of contraceptives and information about them for use within the marriage relationship.

UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 1959

An article review of The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility by Richard M. Fagley. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.



Marital behavior and world impoverishment

There are two great ethical issues confronting contemporary man: one is the massive problem of overpopulation that threatens to outrun man's productive use of the resources of the earth; and the other is the problem of marital morality and responsible parenthood. Viewed from the cold statistics of national birth rates, the problem is remote and beyond the moral decision of the individual. Yet at the level of sexual morality it is as intimate and personal as any issue can be. "Population and parenthood" and their interrelationship as "two aspects of the same phenomenon" form the theme of Dr. Richard M. Fagley's highly significant book.

Causes of population growth

Birthrates are not simply the aggregate result of procreative acts of millions around the world. Population growth is determined by such diverse factors as the relation of mortality rates to birthrates, by the customs and value systems of varied cul-

By Albert T. Rasmussen, Professor of Social Ethics, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, California.

tures, by basic religious views taught and internalized in the lives of people, as well as by interpersonal acts in the mystery of procreation.

Dr. Fagley has painstakingly analyzed the work of leading population authorities, on the one hand, and on the other has traced the development from the Old Testament to the present day toward a doctrine of responsible parenthood. Both converge in the imperative need for responsible planning. No study illustrates as graphically the complex interrelationship of personal and socio-cultural factors in the intricate community of persons. And no study shows more clearly that unyielding moral absolutes which are frozen into inflexible rules and are not related to shifting social contexts may become the sources of vast evil—perhaps even the nemesis of mankind.

As the author shows, in tracing the historical origins of fertility-oriented morality, the problem of depletion and underpopulation long haunted man and influenced the formation of his unlimited obligation to multiply and populate the earth. The continuing search for definitions for Christian responsibility must always combine the response of faithfulness to God and concern for our neighbors with relevance to the concrete situations confronted in the community.

Population forecasts for the U.S.A.

Two factors are responsible for the fact that we in the United States have been slow to recognize the population explosion: the decline in the birthrate that reached its low in the depression years; and the war-stimulated increases in agricultural productivity that have resulted in food surpluses. But even in our highly favored country there is little room for complacency when present trends are projected into the future. The author quotes the surprising forecasts of from 215 to 243 million people in the U.S. by 1975 and a population of 700 million people within a hundred years. Even the United States would be hard pressed to produce the food, the schools, and the facilities to maintain its present standard of living for such a population.

Population forecasts for underdeveloped nations

But for the underdeveloped countries where an overwhelming majority of the world's peoples reside, the growth trends are fantastic. China is increasing at the rate of 44 million persons each

year which means a doubling in the next twenty-three years and a population of 2.6 billion within fifty years. Many of the other countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America show similar trends of growth. Demographers of the United Nations tell us that in 600 years there will only be one square meter of space for each person, if present trends continue.

It is clear that this projection can never actually happen. The tragic work of disease and starvation will have done its lethal limiting long before this point is reached. To the Christian, the exercise of responsible choice in control of population is the only answer that can avoid catastrophe.

Many of the world's underdeveloped countries have embarked upon strenuous programs of industrial and agricultural development in a determined effort to increase their standards of living. But nearly all of these countries find that the population growth is outrunning their productive gains. The political repercussion from such failure will be alarming.

Dr. Fagley analyzes the reasons for the rapid acceleration in population growth and finds that medical advances and "disease control" are key factors in "upsetting the balance of nature." Mortality rates have been falling far more rapidly than birthrates even in most of the underdeveloped countries.

Methods of limiting growth of population

The author devotes chapters to a consideration of the three major ways by which the problem can be met; through migration to sparsely settled areas; through the rapid expansion of food production; and through family limitation. The first two methods appear to be grossly inadequate to keep up with the volume of growth. Therefore, only the method of family limitation or birth control seems capable of saving the world from slow impoverishment.

Religious attitudes toward contraception

Since religious morality is deeply concerned with reproduction and family life, Dr. Fagley reviews the basic attitudes of the principal religions of the world toward responsible parenthood and toward the chief methods of limiting the family. The last half of the book traces the development of Christian thinking about the family from the Old and New Testaments, the early

church, and through the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant divisions of the church.

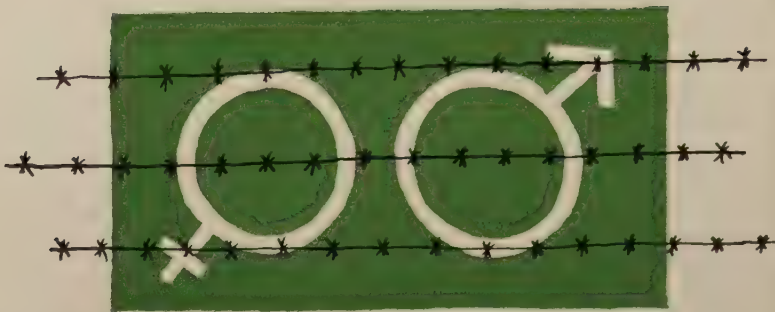
Dr. Fagley finds a general bias toward pro-fertility running through Christian history until the twentieth century. But there is also the concurrent emphasis on faithfulness to God revealed in Christ and liberation from self-serving into responsibility for brother and neighbors, marital mates and children. It was not until the secular birth control movement had gained some headway that theologians and churches began to see the conflict between these two strains of their tradition. Since the decade of the nineteen-twenties the most influential Protestant theologians (Barth, Brunner, Niebuhr, Tillich) and most of the Protestant denominations and councils have reinterpreted responsible parenthood and stated that contraception is beneficial under free and prayerful decision. Marriage is seen not simply for the purpose of procreation, but also for companionship and a mutual expression of love.

The Roman Catholic Church has also moved to accept the legitimacy of family planning but continues to draw a sharp distinction between natural methods, such as periodic continence, and the use of unnatural, invented contrivances. Dr. Fagley does not predict an early shift in the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church, but recognizes that changes do occur in its thinking. This reviewer agrees with his comment that Protestants ought not to enter into conflict with the Roman position which would tend to galvanize its resistance. Instead we ought to press to clarify our own position.

The book is a resource for study and action

This book pulls together the facts of the world situation and the traditions and theological foundations of Christian action which are the basic elements that must be combined in Christian ethics. It provides the documentation and interpretation necessary for placing this "most neglected social issue" squarely on the conscience of Protestants across the land.

To enter into the mystery of procreation is to incur the awesome responsibility of providing tender care and creative opportunity for persons brought into the world. This can be accomplished only in relation to the external resources of the earth and in relationship to the total human community.



Birth control laws in Connecticut and Massachusetts

It is shortly after 2:00 p.m., and the Hall of the House of the State Capitol in Hartford is filled to overflowing by partisan groups of men, women, and school children. Members of the Joint Committee on Public Health and Safety have shuffled onto the platform, and beneath them are the scurrying figures of clerks and secretaries preparing to transcribe the testimony of the afternoon. A steady file of citizens passes before the Speaker's desk to sign the register of those favoring or opposing the bills to be heard that day. The Chairman brings down his gavel, calls the hearing to order, and another debate on the so-called planned parenthood bill is about to begin.

Biennial efforts to change the law

This scene is typical of those which occur in alternate years in Connecticut, when the General Assembly comes into session. Sometimes the crowd is smaller, but because every bill submitted to the General Assembly must receive a public hearing, one can be sure that a pretty good show will be put on when the birth control bill comes up for a hearing.

By William L. Bradley, Professor of Philosophy of Religion, The Hartford Theological Seminary Foundation.

First will be heard all Senators and Representatives who wish to speak to the bill; and because few such individuals can remain silent when two or three hundred voters are assembled, this phase of the hearing extends well beyond an hour. Thereafter the proponents of the bill will be heard, led by the Planned Parenthood League of Connecticut. There will be several doctors to testify about the dangers inherent in childbirth to certain of their patients. There will be clergymen who speak of the need of their parishioners for counsel which they cannot receive because of restrictive legislation. Once there was even a minister who told of his own family problems because his wife must live in an iron lung and dare not risk the dangers of childbirth. This part of the hearing will usually close with the testimony of several women who have received counsel outside the state—and it is fairly clear that some of these are former Roman Catholics.

Finally there will appear the ample figure of the Counsel for the Hartford Roman Catholic Archdiocese, a man trained in the best oratory of the old tradition. He will link this bill with illegal abortions and euthanasia, thereby raising doubts in the minds of some lest they open the doors to all sorts of unnatural vices. Doctors will be called to testify to the fact that tubercular and heart patients need no longer fear childbirth as once they did, and several happy mothers and famous sons will be presented to show that a large family stays together and is praiseworthy in the sight of God and man.

When the hearing is adjourned, both sides will go home with the feeling that they have spoken well. A few weeks later, if the General Assembly is controlled by the Republicans, the bill may be reported out of committee favorably. It will then probably pass the House, which is controlled by voters from the small towns; but it will fail in the Senate, which is under the control of the cities. Thus a law which was enacted in 1879 will continue in effect until another test is made. A similar law holds sway in Massachusetts.

Origin of the present law

Both states enacted legislation after the passage of the Comstock Act in 1873. Catholics are quick to advise Protestants that the original act was not passed by Catholics, though it serves their interests now. Connecticut prohibits even the practice of contraception by use of chemical or mechanical means; Massa-

chusetts seems to allow for verbal advice on the part of doctors, but it does prohibit the establishment of clinics. Obviously the laws are not enforced as tightly as they might be.

It is in respect to the establishment of clinics that the laws are most restrictive. The Planned Parenthood Leagues of Massachusetts and Connecticut operated many clinics over a period of years, giving advice on family planning and helping those who had been unable to have children. Through the pressures of the Roman Catholic Church the clinic in Salem, Massachusetts, was raided, and in 1937 the League was forced to close all its clinics in the state. A similar incident in Waterbury in 1939 caused the

Except in Connecticut and Massachusetts there is no legal bar in any state to the prescription of Planned Parenthood services by physicians and we see no reason why such services should not be made a part of any health department maternal and child health services, at the state, county, or local level.

—MRS. HARRIET PILPEL of Greenbaum, Wolff and Ernst, counsel for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Connecticut League to discontinue its clinics. It is for this reason that the League has led the fight in both states to have the statutes repealed or amended. They contend that the Roman Catholic Church may be justified in directing its own members on the subject of birth control, but that the public at large should not be placed under the restrictions of one religious group.

The courts have ruled that the Massachusetts law is constitutional. Efforts to pass new legislation have been sidetracked. In 1942 and 1948 petitions were circulated for an initiative referendum, but in both years the voters rejected repeal by a 7-5 margin. Efforts to repeal the Connecticut law came close to success in 1953, but since that time there has been little progress. Whereas formerly the Republicans were Protestant, now Republicans are as often Catholic, and this makes repeal unlikely.

Cases in courts to test the constitutionality of the law

At present there are eight cases before the courts of Connecticut to test the constitutionality of the law on various counts. One such case is that filed by three clergymen (Episcopal, Lu-

theran, and Methodist) who claim that the separation of church and state has been abridged, in that they cannot fulfil their pastoral functions under this law.

Passions are strong on this issue. Roman Catholic teaching runs counter to the beliefs of many who have little sympathy with any church. They cannot imagine how any church could believe itself to be responsible for the morality of society at large. Many Protestants who oppose the Catholics on birth control take quite the opposite stand on another problem of public morality: gambling. Thus the efforts to legalize minor forms of social gambling are met with stern resistance on the part of Protestants but usually have the support of Catholics.

Prospects for change

It would seem that any change in present legislation can come about only if one of two things occurs. Either the courts will have to rule that such legislation is unconstitutional, or there will have to be a change of attitude on the part of the religious leaders. Protestants can do much to change the emotional climate of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Ways of understanding must be found; and there must be efforts to cooperate with Catholics on issues of common concern. At the present time two men in Massachusetts are doing much to bring about rapprochement between Protestants and Catholics. Dr. Myron W. Fowell, Secretary of the Massachusetts Congregational Conference, and Dr. Forrest Knapp, of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, are beginning to build a bridge between these two religious groups. In Connecticut the Rev. Harold Keir, of the Connecticut Council of Churches, is beginning to do the same.

It is hard to convince those outside the Church, as well as many Protestants, that problems of a religious nature must be solved by those in religious authority. Leaders of the Planned Parenthood League, for example, are convinced that this is not a religious issue. However, it is religious as long as the Roman Catholic Church insists it is, and it will be treated as such by courts and legislatures. There is no natural way in which secular executives can meet on common ground with religious executives, and for that reason the efforts now being made on both sides by Protestant and Catholic clergy appear to be the only means—other than court decisions—by which present restrictive legislation can be modified.

Responsible parenthood and the population problem

A statement adopted by the Council for Christian Social Action of the United Church of Christ, January 30, 1960

The Council for Christian Social Action of the United Church of Christ affirms the following statement and calls upon the members of our churches to give it earnest thought and prayerful consideration.

A major problem of our time is popularly called "the population explosion." It presently challenges the thinking of political leaders and of social scientists who are engaged in programs to improve the welfare of people everywhere. Technological progress has reduced death rates and improved opportunities for human life to such an extent as to make possible the doubling of the world's population in the last half century, and to give us the expectation of almost tripling our present numbers in another half century. This increasing population demands attention from all, particularly those who are already concerned about the misery and hunger which always accompany population pressures. Christian teaching concerning the rights of people yet unborn demands that we learn how to control population growth. So it is important that the church should speak to this problem.

Population control begins in the family

The problem of population control is related to the institution of the family. Since all children need personal love and nurture, the church must do what it can to support the development of strong family life.

The Christian family begins when two persons are drawn to each other in the covenant of marriage, and the two "become one flesh" (Eph. 5:31). Marriage, in the Christian understanding of

it, is a divinely given vocation as well as a free decision on the part of two people. It is a responsible act on the part of two responsible persons. It has its basis, indeed, in nature: it is the response to a mutual attraction of the one for the other. It includes the specifically ethical element of a life-long mutual loyalty. From the perspective of the marriage partners who are ethically serious the marriage bond requires freely-given mutual love.

This freely-given mutual love will express itself in various ways: in companionship, in acts of selfless service, and in sexual intercourse, all of which are necessary parts of a true marriage. Two purposes are achieved in sexual intercourse: the expression of love between two partners and the procreation of children. The first of these purposes may be achieved without the other. The procreation of children is a further gift of God, and a sharing in his creation. As was said by an ecumenical study group, "A knowledge of the relation of sexual love to the procreation process gives to a couple the power, and therefore the responsibility, to lift the begetting of children out of the realm of biological accident, or 'fate,' into the realm of grace where man is free to wait upon God and consciously to respond to his will."¹

Parents responsible for spacing births

In a responsible Christian marriage there will ordinarily be a willingness to enlarge the family fellowship to include children, and a desire to establish an environment in which children can find security, status, and a sense of being wanted and needed. Questions which need to be asked by every parent relate to how many children they shall have, and at what intervals. These questions need to be answered responsibly as parents carefully consider their economic, spiritual, psychological, and physical ability to make adequate provision for children, to surround them with love and care, and to help them prepare for the opportunities and duties they must meet. The physical and emotional health of the wife-mother and husband-father must also be a major concern.

Since husbands and wives owe a responsibility to other families on the earth, they must take into account the relation of nat-

¹ *Responsible Parenthood and the Population Problem*, Report of a Special Ecumenical Study Group, Mansfield College, Oxford, 12-15 April 1959, p. 5.

ural resources to the total population. Under present circumstances this means that most couples have not only the right but also the moral obligation to space and limit the number of births. Procreation without regard to the consequences may be as irresponsible as refusal to assume the duties of parenthood.

Selection of acceptable means of limiting births

In considering this problem husbands and wives who accept the obligation to space and limit the number of their children are confronted with the decision as to the means they will use. Is periodic continence the only morally acceptable method, or may mechanical and chemical barriers to the union of sperm and ovum be employed? We endorse the position taken in 1958 by the Lambeth Conference of the Bishops of the Anglican Communion: "It must be emphasized once again that family planning ought to be the result of thoughtful and prayerful Christian decision. Where it is, Christian husbands and wives need feel no hesitation in offering their decision humbly to God and following it with a clear conscience. The *means* of family planning are in large measure matters of clinical and aesthetic choice, subject to the requirement that they be admissible to the Christian conscience. Scientific studies can rightly help, and do, in assessing the effects and the usefulness of any particular means; and Christians have every right to use the gifts of science for proper ends."

There are other problems to be considered in this connection. Christians are deeply concerned about the moral problems of sex relations before marriage, and outside of the marriage bond. From the Christian viewpoint both are violations of God's will as expressed in the moral law. Advocacy of the use of contraceptives by married couples is not an endorsement of promiscuity among the unmarried.

Nor can we condone the practice of abortion, which is known to be widespread in today's world as a means of preventing the birth of unwanted children. The practice of abortion is a moral as well as a medical and legal problem. Christian conscience cannot approve of abortion as a means of family planning, for it violates personality and involves the destruction of human life.

Another method of controlling conception is sterilization. In some countries voluntary sterilization is endorsed by govern-

ment, and it has been accepted by some parents who desire to limit the size of their families. In the United States it is sometimes performed with the written consent of husband and wife when the latter's health seems to require it. The whole subject of sterilization is in need of careful study. It should be approached with sympathetic understanding of those factors which make the use of mechanical contraceptives most difficult.

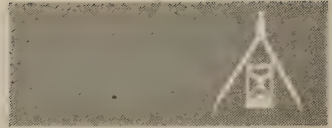
Legal sanctions

In light of the foregoing considerations we hold that responsible family planning is today a clear moral duty. We believe that public law and public institutions should sanction the distribution through authorized channels of reliable information and contraceptive devices. Laws which forbid doctors, social workers and ministers to provide such information and service are infringements of the rights of free citizens and should be removed from the statute books. Any hospital which receives public funds should permit doctors to provide all services they consider necessary.

Technical assistance and family limitation

Those who are responsible for international technical assistance programs should give serious and realistic consideration to the implications of the population explosion in many economically less developed countries. These countries find themselves in a dangerous economic situation because of the rapid decline in death rates brought about by international assistance in medicine and public health. A foreign aid program which has helped lower the death rates must also be concerned with a rising birth rate. Yet countries which desire to reduce the resultant population pressure through the encouragement of family planning are receiving little or no assistance on the technical problems involved. This situation imperils their development programs. There is little hope for the success of such efforts unless birth rates are reduced. Therefore those responsible for international technical assistance programs should include family limitation helps to those governments requesting them.

We call upon the members of our churches, voluntary agencies, and the Government of the United States of America to give serious consideration and active support to these principles.



CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON FAMILY PLANNING

Churches have three major responsibilities concerning the population problem and family planning: to help their members understand the population explosion and its threat to human values; to gain Christian perspective on the family and the spacing of children; and to encourage church members to take their part as citizens in deciding the course the U.S. Government should follow concerning the population explosion.

Study in the committee

Discussion within the Social Action Committee might follow an outline such as this:

THE POPULATION EXPLOSION

How serious is the population problem in the underdeveloped countries? In the United States? Does our Government have responsibility for giving birth control information and materials to those nations which ask for it? (See *SOCIAL ACTION*, December 1958.)

CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON FAMILY PLANNING

Why was the injunction to "be fruitful and multiply" essential in Old Testament times? How does "Jesus Christ bring

freedom from this law"? (See page 10.) What methods of family limitation are permissible for Christians?

SELECTION OF ACTION PROJECTS

What responsibility does the Social Action Committee have for helping groups within the church gain Christian perspective on the population problem and family planning? Among the groups to consider are: young married couples, high school students and other young people, and adults responsible for public policy. (See below for program suggestions for each of these groups.)

SELECTION OF RESOURCES

Does the committee have access to the books and pamphlets it needs? Or should it obtain some of the following:

Additional copies of this issue of *SOCIAL ACTION* and of the December 1958 issue on "The Population Explosion."

"That Population Explosion," *Time*, January 11, 1960.

Population Growth: a World-wide Problem, a list of selected readings available from the World Affairs Center, 345 East 46th St., New York, N. Y., for 25¢ each.

Simple Methods of Contraception: an Assessment of Their Medical, Moral and Social Implications, by Winfield Best and Frederick S. Jaffe, editors, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 501 Madison Ave., New York 22, N.Y., 1958, 64 pp., 25¢.

The Population Explosion and Christian Responsibility, by Richard M. Fagley (New York: Oxford University Press, 260 pp., \$4.25).

"The Churches Speak Up on Birth Control," a flier available in quantity from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 501 Madison Ave., New York 22, N.Y. Single copies 5¢; 25 for \$1.00; 100 for \$3.00.

Will these or other films be useful to the Committee in planning its program:

The Population Explosion, a 16 mm. black and white film of the broadcast by CBS on November 11, 1959. The film runs for 45 minutes and rents for \$20. It is a documentary of India's population problem and includes interviews with Prime Minister Nehru, Lady Rama Rau and other Indian leaders. For information write Carousel Films, Suite 1503, 1501 Broadway, New York 36, N. Y.

Fair Chance, a 16 mm. film which runs 14 minutes. The color version rents for \$5, and the black and white for \$3.00 from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 501 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y., and certain of its local

branches. The film shows two fathers in the waiting room of a maternity ward. Charles senses the anguish which Joe is suffering as he awaits the difficult delivery of his fourth child. Joe is fearful for the life of his wife and for the economic security of his family. They go out for coffee and conversation. Charles describes his own impoverished childhood in a family of eight children and indicates that his children will have a fair chance because he and his wife plan when they are to be born.

Program for couples

A series of three to five meetings might include discussion of these topics:

The Population Explosion, introduced by the film of this title; and discussion of SOCIAL ACTION for December 1958.

Christian Perspective on Family Planning introduced with a speech by the minister; and discussion of Dr. Arndt's article in this issue.

Program for young people

A Christian Response to the Population Problem, introduced by a true-false test, checked by the members. Discussion could center on those statements which are answered incorrectly and on which opinions differ. A second meeting might be based on Dr. Arndt's article in this issue. Groups which wish to go more deeply into the subject might study the new book by Dr. Fagley.

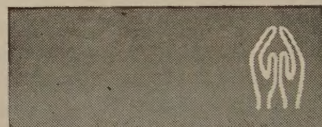
Action projects

Community action toward family planning. Church members may wish to cooperate with Planned Parenthood in helping young couples in the community to understand family planning and the attitudes of the churches toward it. They may wish to use the flier "Churches Speak Up" and the film *Fair Chance*.

Legislative action. If restrictive laws exist in the state or municipality, help to change them. Study the policy of the U.S. Government toward giving contraceptive information and materials to those nations which request them; and express your convictions to Congressmen and others.

—FERN BABCOCK

resources for worship



THE FAMILY UNDER GOD

Scripture

"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7, 18-24.

Ephesians 5:21-6:4.

Hymns

Our Father, by Whose Name
I Sing the Mighty Power of
God

Let the Whole Creation Cry

Meditation

When two people plight their troth, they give themselves into each other's keeping. This is the ultimate leap of faith on the level of human relationships. No court can legislate this union of two spirits into being, nor can it dissolve the relationship by decree. When this common

life is nourished with the resources of God who is love, it will continue to flourish and produce undreamed of riches of mutual joy and understanding.

But as with all other human relationships, the potential for good is balanced by the potential for evil. Should irresponsibility, or neglect, or selfishness, or any other lesser motive intrude, deep suffering, bitter disillusionment, and utter tragedy may result. The confidence freely given turns into cheap familiarity; the hopes mutually shared can become vicious demands for self-gratification; and the lives entrusted to each other are exploited for selfish ends.

The sacred covenant of the marriage bond reveals more clearly than any other human relationship the bond that God

has purposed between himself and man. When there is fidelity and faithfulness, life is rich with meaning and promise. Idolatry destroys the basis of fellowship and communion, and life ends in despair. The biblical view is clear and insistent that any covenant between man rests ultimately upon the prior covenant between man and God.

Litany for families

For the mysterious power that draws man and maid to choose a common destiny,

We thank thee, our Father.

For the ways of love which seek more to serve and give satisfaction than to be served and demand gratification,

We thank thee, our Father.

For the encouragement to grow that each gives to each, and for the mutual support in times of discouragement,

We thank thee, our Father.

For the sacred calling to join hands in creative effort with thee, that the family of man may continue through the generations,

We thank thee, our Father.

That our homes may be worthy of thy purpose,

We beseech thee to help us, O God.

That the life among family members may witness to thy transforming power,

We beseech thee to help us, O God.

That we may ever be mindful of our stewardship of the crea-

tive gifts which thou hast entrusted to us,

We beseech thee to help us, O God.

And for the assurance that in the intimate relationships of the family circle, when guided by thy spirit, we can see reflections of thy heavenly kingdom,

We give thee glory and praise, and pray for thy continued blessings, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Prayer

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who settest the solitary in families; we commend to thy continual care the homes in which thy people dwell. Put far from them, we beseech thee, every root of bitterness, the desire of vain-glory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy wedlock have been made one flesh; turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we be evermore kindly affectioned with brotherly love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

(Prepared by WALTER E. DOBLER, Secretary, Adult Work and Family Life, Board of Home Missions, Congregational and Christian Churches, Boston, Mass.)

social action calendar



- APRIL 26-28:** *CCSA Washington Seminar*, United Church of Christ.*
Director: Miss Fern Babcock
- JUNE 6-10:** *Central Christian Social Action Institute*. Dunkirk,
N. Y.* Dean: Rev. Herman F. Reissig. Cost, \$30.
- JUNE 20-24:** *West Coast Christian Social Action Institute*. Mill
Valley, Calif.* Dean: Julian J. Keiser. Cost, \$30.
- JUNE 22-JULY 7:** *Hawaiian Seminar*. Leaders: Rev. and Mrs. Galen
R. Weaver. Cost from San Francisco and return, \$692.
- JUNE 22-AUGUST 23:** *World Seminar*. Leaders: Dr. and Mrs. Ray
Gibbons. Cost, \$2800.
- JUNE 20-JULY 2:** *Seventeenth Annual Race Relations Institute*, Fisk
University, Nashville, Tenn. Director: Dr. Herman H. Long.
- JULY 11-15:** *Midwest Christian Social Action Institute*. Sheboygan,
Wisc.* Dean: Dr. Huber F. Klemme. Cost, \$30.
- JULY 18-22:** *Southern Christian Social Action Institute*, Black
Mountain, N. C.* Dean: Rev. James H. Lightbourne, Jr.
Cost, \$30.
- JULY 25-29:** *Eastern Christian Social Action Institute*. Framing-
ham, Mass.* Dean: Rev. F. Nelsen Schlegel. Cost, \$30.
- AUGUST 3-22:** *Mexican Seminar*. Leaders: Dr. and Mrs. Huber
F. Klemme. Cost, \$295 in Mexico.

* Limited scholarship help available from the CCSA. Members of
CC churches, write Miss Fern Babcock, 289 Park Avenue South,
New York 10, New York. E and R members, write the Rev. F. Nelsen
Schlegel, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.

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